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Douglas County PUD commits to load reduction

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Bonneville Power Administration

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East Wenatchee, Wash. – The Public Utility District #1 of Douglas County and the Bonneville Power Administration signed an agreement June 22 that will reduce Douglas' power purchases from BPA by 5 percent, or 10 average megawatts, during October, November and December for two years starting October 2001.

"Electric customers in the Northwest states are facing huge rate increases as a result of inadequate power supply and high wholesale prices," said Douglas County PUD Manager Bill Dobbins. "Douglas PUD is pleased to play a role in the load reduction solution. This purchase reduction will help BPA offer lower rates to its other customers without jeopardizing the power supply for Douglas County."

Steve Wright, BPA's acting administrator, praised the utility's commitment, saying, "Douglas County PUD has taken a significant step toward conservation and load reduction and by doing so it is helping reduce the rate increase planned for Oct. 1. Douglas is doing its part, and we hope that other utilities will do the same."

Douglas owns shares of dams on the mid-Columbia River that produce enough power to meet the PUD's customer requirements. In 1998 Douglas purchased a block of power from BPA to supplement its own supply. Although Douglas was not obligated to reduce its purchases from BPA, it has agreed to return a portion of the power it purchased in 1998.

BPA's goal is to reduce loads for the next two years so the agency does not have to buy power in the extremely expensive wholesale market, which could result in far higher electricity rates for Northwest ratepayers. BPA expects that within two years

sufficient new generation will have come online so market prices will stabilize. Consumers can help by conserving as much electricity as possible.

On June 6, BPA announced that the region's federal electricity system is headed for wholesale rate increases of 150 percent or more beginning Oct. 1 unless its industrial and utility customers make additional commitments to reduce energy use by the agency's June 22 deadline.

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